INNOVATION™
the MAZE AGENCY
13
HUGHES S. MACHAR
CK WAS HERE

INNOVATION™

Working Our Way Through The *MAZE*

Originally, I'd planned to write a full editorial about this wonderfully strange issue of ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** -- about this being a special "Justice Girl" issue, the background for which you'll find in an *Adam Hughes*-drawn ***MAZE*** story that's only appeared in full in ***MAZE BOOK: THE MAZE AGENCY COLLECTION #1***. It revealed "Justice Girl" as a comics character that Jennifer read in her youth.

I also wanted to type volumes about now much I love Adam Hughes' cover to this issue...and how wonderful ***LEGENDS OF THE STARGRAZERS*** inker *Randy Elliott*'s inks look on this issue. But I've managed to say it all in only two paragraphs, so how about my tackling a second subject?

We've a book on sale right now that I think will thrill every ***MAZE AGENCY*** fan -- entitled, aptly enough, ***THE MAZE AGENCY SPECIAL #1***. It's been in the works for about a year and a half, and I think the results are worth it.

Tell you what: I'll let the author of this book -- *Mike W. Barr* -- tell you about it...

"One of the compulsive side-effects of creating characters is that you want to have them drawn by every good artist you can think of, to see how each individual talent will treat them. That was part of the reason behind what became ***THE MAZE AGENCY SPECIAL #1***.

"To tie the stories together, I decided series protagonists Jennifer Mays and Gabe Webb would solve three separate homicides in the space of a single day...a kind of murder marathon, you might say.

"The first two choices were relatively simple: I've long been a fan of -- and too infrequently a collaborator with -- artist *Joe Staton*, and wanted to see his interpretation of the ***MAZE*** cast. (Joe would later go on to pencil *The Maze Agency* #6 for Comico, but his story here is embellished by series inker *Rick Magyar*.) Speaking of Rick, he certainly deserved a chance to show what he could do on his own behind the drawing board, and I think his offering here will surprise only those who haven't seen his full art elsewhere.

"As to the last story...well, editor emeritus Michael Eury and I had been discussing that with no firm decision, when Mike called me one day to tell me that the *Pander Brothers*, Jacob and Arnold, were available. After recalling their unique (in the exact meaning of the word) work on the *Ginger Fox* mini-series at Comico, I realized I *had* to see what Jen and Gabe's world looked like through the eyes of Los Bros. Pander.

"I had no idea what I would see; I only knew that I wouldn't be disappointed. (While showing their story to former series penciller *Adam Hughes*, I commented that the Panders Brothers' version of Lieutenant Bliss 'could lick any man in the place.' 'While giving birth,' added Adam, trenchantly.)

"As an added treat, we decided to include the very first ***MAZE AGENCY*** story ever drawn, by artist *Alan Davis*.

"Wrap a cover by *Bill Willingham* and *Magyar* around that, and you have an entertainment package that's difficult to beat. Possible, maybe -- but darn difficult."

You don't hear *me* disagreeing with those sentiments. Everything's been ready, waiting for the art for the last story to arrive -- Rick finally got it in, and it's lovely! -- and it's going to press in a few days, as I type this.

This book has been worth taking a year and a half to prepare. It's $2.75, in full color, and is on sale right now.

Go out. Get it. Read it. And write to tell us what you thought of it!

-- David Campiti
February, 1990

THE MAZE AGENCY®
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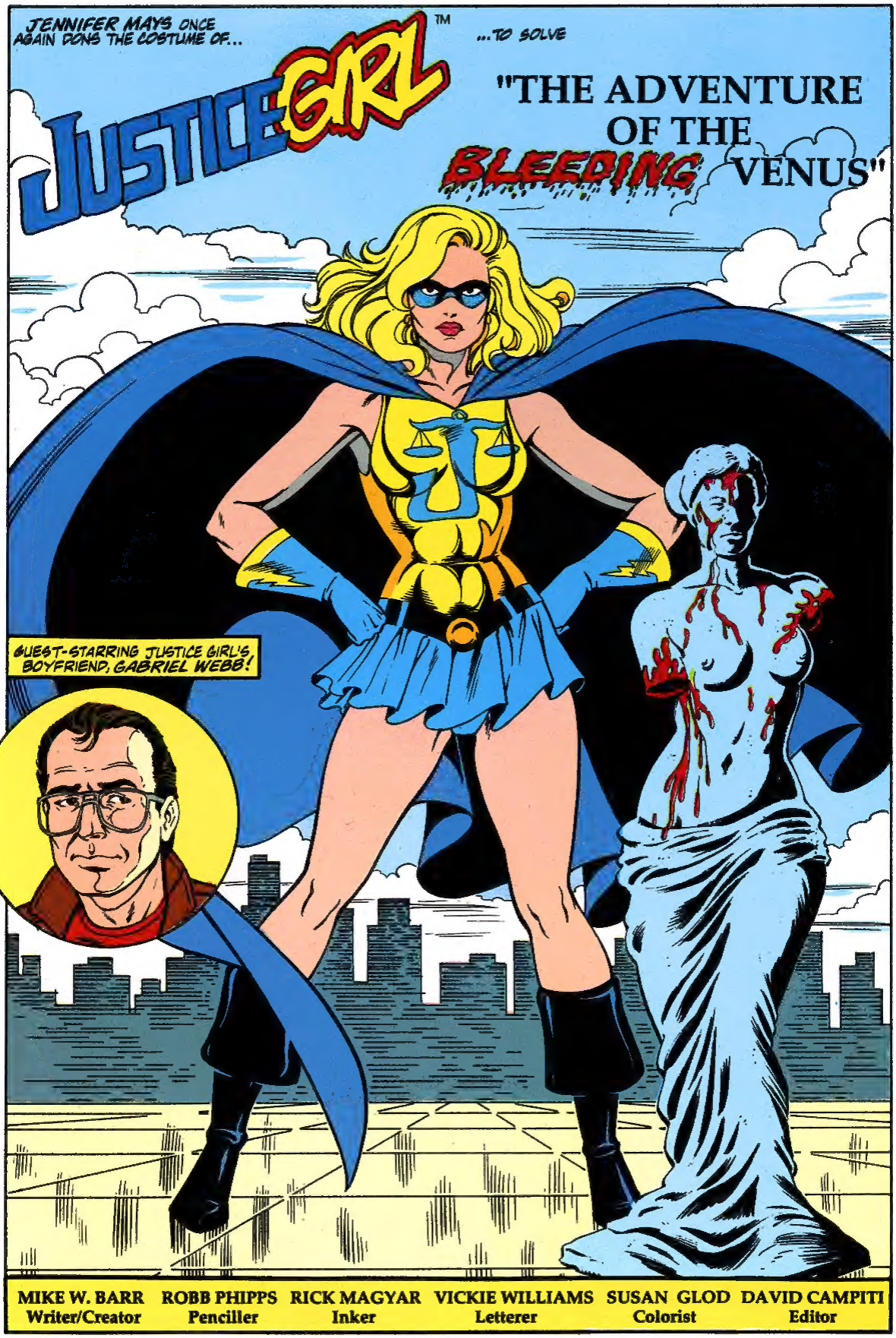
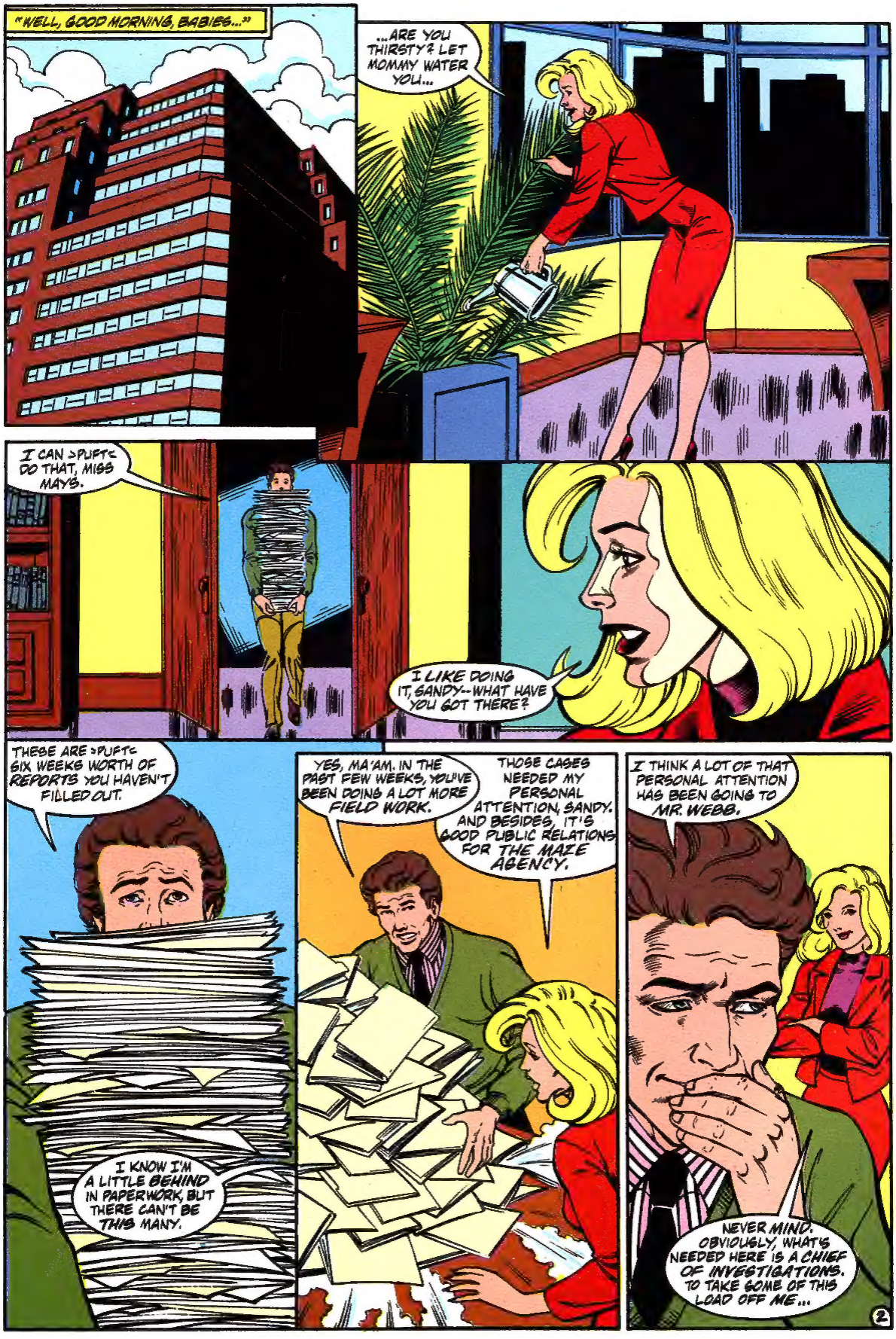
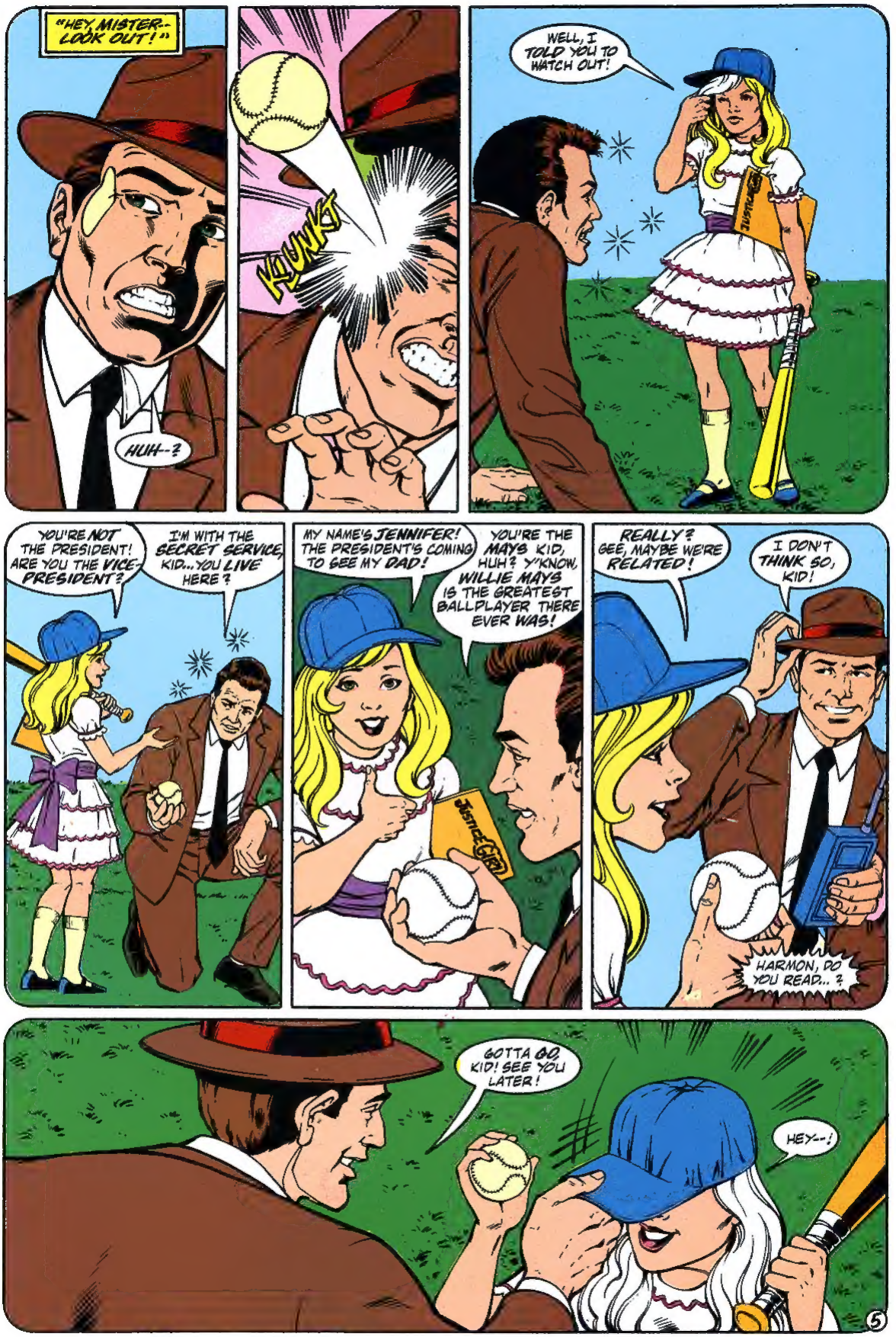

JENNIFER MAYS ONCE AGAIN DONS THE COSTUME OF...
JUSTICE GIRL™
...TO SOLVE
"THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLEEDING VENUS"
GUEST-STARRING JUSTICE GIRL'S BOYFRIEND, GABRIEL WEBB!
MIKE W. BARR Writer/Creator
ROBB PHIPPS Penciller
RICK MAGYAR Inker
VICKIE WILLIAMS Letterer
SUSAN GLOD Colorist
DAVID CAMPITI Editor

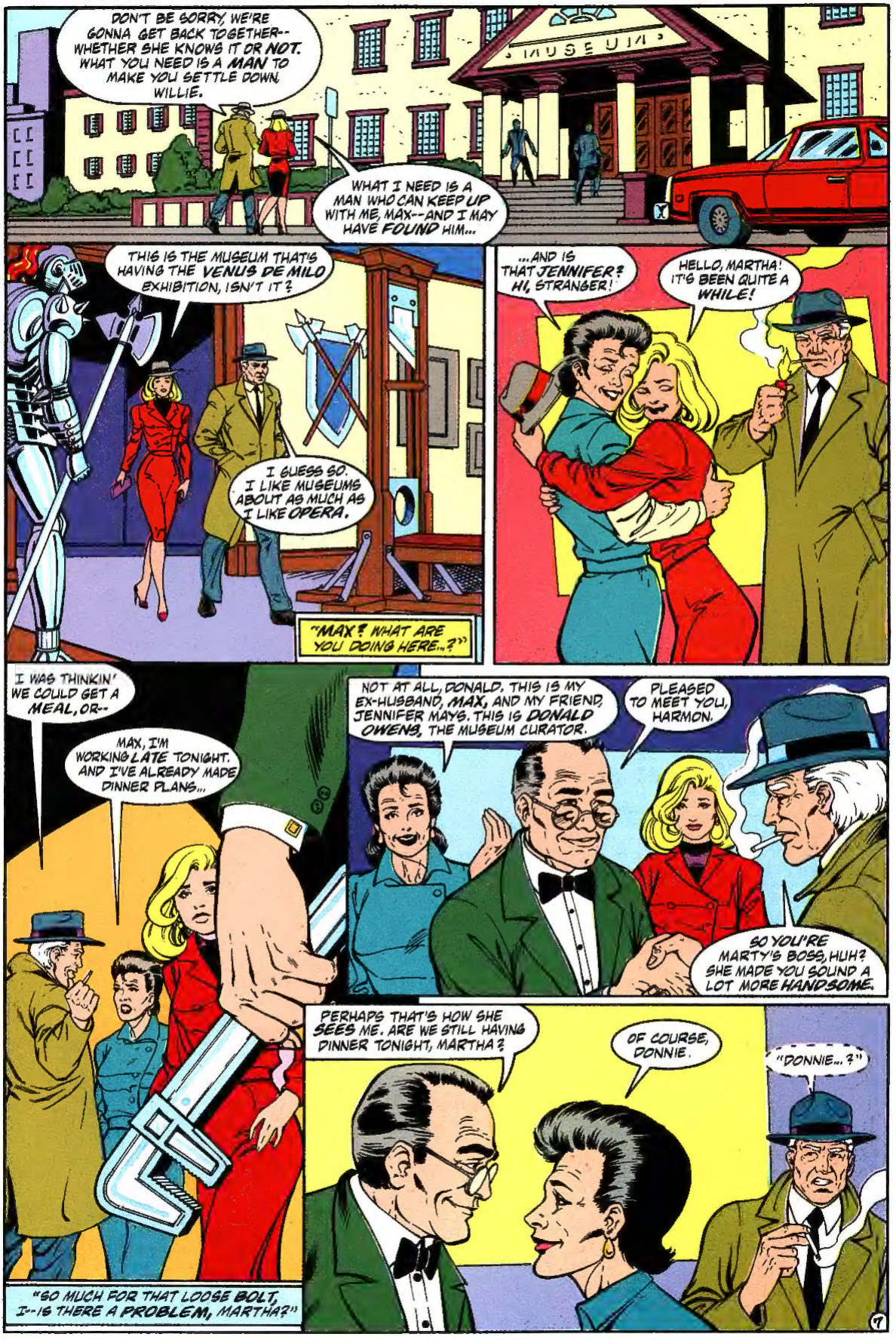

"WELL, GOOD MORNING, BABIES..."
...ARE YOU THIRSTY? LET MOMMY WATER YOU...
I CAN >PUFT< DO THAT, MISS MAYS.
I LIKE DOING IT, SANDY--WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE?
THESE ARE >PUFT< SIX WEEKS WORTH OF REPORTS YOU HAVEN'T FILLED OUT.
I KNOW I'M A LITTLE BEHIND IN PAPERWORK, BUT THERE CAN'T BE THIS MANY.
YES, MA'AM. IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, YOU'VE BEEN DOING A LOT MORE FIELD WORK.
THOSE CASES NEEDED MY PERSONAL ATTENTION, SANDY. AND BESIDES, IT'S GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR THE MAZE AGENCY.
I THINK A LOT OF THAT PERSONAL ATTENTION HAS BEEN GOING TO MR. WEBB.
NEVER MIND. OBVIOUSLY, WHAT'S NEEDED HERE IS A CHIEF OF INVESTIGATIONS. TO TAKE SOME OF THIS LOAD OFF ME...
2

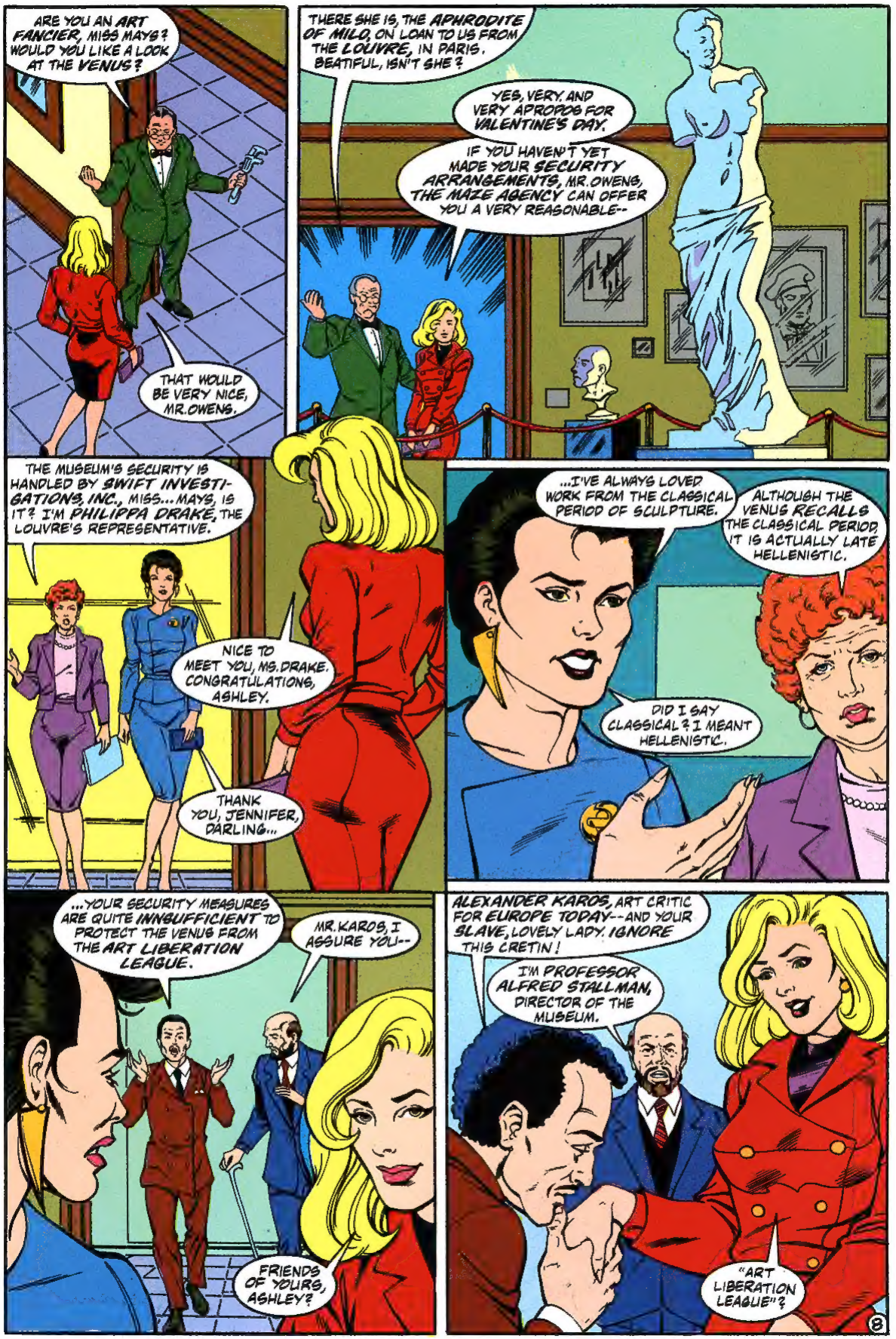
...AND I KNOW JUST THE MAN. IN THE MEANTIME, GET THAT MESS OFF MY DESK.
BUT MISS MAYS...
>SIGH<
"YOUR WIFE LEFT YOU? TOUGH. THAT'S WHAT'LL HAPPEN WHEN YOU CHEAT ON HER!"
MAX HARMON
PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR
" BUT YOU GAVE HER THE PICTURES, HARMON...!
...IT'S YOUR FAULT!
THAT'S WHAT SHE HIRED ME FOR, PAL! YEAH, IT'S MY FAULT...
MOMR
...LOSERS ALWAYS BLAME SOMEBODY ELSE!
>UNF<
3

THUDWHAPWHUD
I THINK THIS DISPUTE OUGHT TO BE ARBITRATED BY A THIRD PARTY!
DON'T SHOOT-!
I DIDN'T NEED YOUR HELP WHOEVER YOU--
IT DIDN'T LOOK THAT WAY TO ME, MAX!
WILLIE!
THIS IS HARMON. EAST SIDE OF THE ESTATE IS SECURE...
...I'M PROCEEDING TO THE SOUTH SIDE NOW.


"HEY, MISTER--LOOK OUT!"
HUH--?
KLUNK!
WELL, I TOLD YOU TO WATCH OUT!
YOU'RE NOT THE PRESIDENT! ARE YOU THE VICE-PRESIDENT?
I'M WITH THE SECRET SERVICE, KID... YOU LIVE HERE?
MY NAME'S JENNIFER! THE PRESIDENT'S COMING TO SEE MY DAD!
YOU'RE THE MAYS KID, HUH? Y'KNOW, WILLIE MAYS IS THE GREATEST BALLPLAYER THERE EVER WAS!
REALLY? GEE, MAYBE WE'RE RELATED!
I DON'T THINK SO, KID!
HARMON, DO YOU READ... ?
GOTTA GO, KID! SEE YOU LATER!
HEY--!

THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, HUH?
IT SEEMS ALMOST THAT LONG SINCE I'VE SEEN YOU MAX! YOU NEVER HAVE COME TO SEE MY NEW OFFICE..
THE MAZE AGENCY
"I SAW YOUR FIRST OFFICE, WILLIE, AFTER YOU SPLIT FROM THAT SWIFT DAME! AN OFFICE IS JUST A PLACE TO HANG YOUR HAT, ANYWAY!"
LOOK, I GOTTA MEET MARTY! YOU WANNA WALK WITH ME? TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE DOIN' HERE?
ALL RIGHT. I'VE COME TO OFFER YOU A JOB, MAX-- AT MAZE.
WORK FOR YOU? AND GIVE ALL THIS?
I REALIZE IT WOULD BE QUITE A SACRIFICE...
NAH, I LIKE BEIN' MY OWN BOSS! BESIDES, THE P. I. GAME'S NO PLACE FOR A BROAD.
I AM NOT A "BROAD." BESIDES, YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER, MAX. THINK OF MARTHA...
MARTY AND I GOT DIVORCED A YEAR AGO, WILLIE.
OH, MAX, I'M SO SORRY..
IT WAS MY OWN FAULT-- I WAS CHEATING ON HER.
6


DON'T BE SORRY, WE'RE GONNA GET BACK TOGETHER--WHETHER SHE KNOWS IT OR NOT. WHAT YOU NEED IS A MAN TO MAKE YOU SETTLE DOWN, WILLIE.
MUSEUM
WHAT I NEED IS A MAN WHO CAN KEEP UP WITH ME, MAX--AND I MAY HAVE FOUND HIM...
THIS IS THE MUSEUM THAT'S HAVING THE VENUS DE MILO EXHIBITION, ISN'T IT?
I GUESS SO. I LIKE MUSEUMS ABOUT AS MUCH AS I LIKE OPERA.
"MAX? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE...?"
...AND IS THAT JENNIFER? HI, STRANGER!
HELLO, MARTHA! IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE!
I WAS THINKIN' WE COULD GET A MEAL, OR--
MAX, I'M WORKING LATE TONIGHT. AND I'VE ALREADY MADE DINNER PLANS...
NOT AT ALL, DONALD. THIS IS MY EX-HUSBAND, MAX, AND MY FRIEND, JENNIFER MAYS. THIS IS DONALD OWENS, THE MUSEUM CURATOR.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU, HARMON.
SO YOU'RE MARTY'S BOSS, HUH? SHE MADE YOU SOUND A LOT MORE HANDSOME.
"SO MUCH FOR THAT LOOSE BOLT, I--IS THERE A PROBLEM, MARTHA?"
PERHAPS THAT'S HOW SHE SEES ME. ARE WE STILL HAVING DINNER TONIGHT, MARTHA?
OF COURSE, DONNIE.
"DONNIE...?"


ARE YOU AN ART FANCIER, MISS MAYS? WOULD YOU LIKE A LOOK AT THE VENUS?
THAT WOULD BE VERY NICE, MR. OWENS.
THERE SHE IS, THE APHRODITE OF MILO, ON LOAN TO US FROM THE LOUVRE, IN PARIS. BEATIFUL, ISN'T SHE?
YES, VERY, AND VERY APROPOS FOR VALENTINE'S DAY.
IF YOU HAVEN'T YET MADE YOUR SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS, MR. OWENS, THE MAZE AGENCY CAN OFFER YOU A VERY REASONABLE--
THE MUSEUM'S SECURITY IS HANDLED BY SWIFT INVESTIGATIONS, INC., MISS... MAYS, IS IT? I'M PHILIPPA DRAKE, THE LOUVRE'S REPRESENTATIVE.
NICE TO MEET YOU, MS. DRAKE. CONGRATULATIONS, ASHLEY.
THANK YOU, JENNIFER, DARLING...
...I'VE ALWAYS LOVED WORK FROM THE CLASSICAL PERIOD OF SCULPTURE.
ALTHOUGH THE VENUS RECALLS THE CLASSICAL PERIOD, IT IS ACTUALLY LATE HELLENISTIC.
DID I SAY CLASSICAL? I MEANT HELLENISTIC.
...YOUR SECURITY MEASURES ARE QUITE INSUFFICIENT TO PROTECT THE VENUS FROM THE ART LIBERATION LEAGUE.
MR. KAROS, I ASSURE YOU--
FRIENDS OF YOURS, ASHLEY?
ALEXANDER KAROS, ART CRITIC FOR EUROPE TODAY--AND YOUR SLAVE, LOVELY LADY. IGNORE THIS CRETIN!
I'M PROFESSOR ALFRED STALLMAN, DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM.
"ART LIBERATION LEAGUE"?
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#1 -- Amiga Version ($19.95)

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#1 -- Bo Hampton art! ($7.00)
#2 -- Hampton/Statema art ($5.00)
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#4 -- Hampton art ($4.00)
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HERO ALLIANCE: END OF THE GOLDEN AGE **(Full Color)**
#1 -- Legend retold, w/new Bart Sears/Ron Lim art! First printing -- sold out from publisher! ($15.00)
#1 -- First printing, signed by the author ($20.00)
#1 -- Second printing ($1.95)
#2 -- Lim/Sears art. New Statema "Rage" -- sold out from the publisher! ($12.00)
#3 -- Ron Lim, Brasfield art. ($3.00)

HERO ALLIANCE MONTHLY
(Full Color) All-new regular series
#1 -- Ron Lim new art! Limited quantities available ($2.50)
#2 -- Ron Lim new art! Great story, extra pages ($2.00)
#3 -- Craig Brasfield art! Plus Ron Lim *Stargrazers*! ($2.00)
#4 -- Bob Ingersoll story! ($1.95)
#5 -- Sexy "Kris" Ron Lim cover! Excellent Mark Jones art ($1.95)

#6 -- How can you tell hero from villain without a scorecard? ($1.95)
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#1 -- Limited edition, signed and numbered by the author ($19.95)
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#1 -- The original, long out of print! Ron Lim/Craig Brasfield art ($3.50)

HERO ALLIANCE: THE GRAPHIC NOVEL (Full Color)
#1 -- The original Pied Piper graphic album, re-distributed by Innovation! *Nearly sold out* ($12.95)

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#1 -- Classic film noir vampire mystery! ($3.00)
#2 -- The saga concludes. VanHook art ($3.00)

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#1 -- By artist of *Cyberpunk*! ($2.50)
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#1 -- John Byrne cover! ($2.75)

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#1 -- First printing! Ron Lim "good girl" art ($5.00)
#2 -- Drug issue! Lim art ($3.00)
#3 -- Ron Lim art ($2.50)
#4 -- Ripped costumes, "tease" cover. Ron Lim art ($2.25)
#5 -- The New Humans debut. Lim/Atkinson art ($2.00)
#6 -- Only authorized 1st printing. Lim art. Scarce! ($3.50)
#7 -- Last authorized issue; 1st printing. Lim art. Scarce ($3.00)
#8 -- Bootleg issue! The first produced without authorization from the creators. Rare! ($5.00)
#1 -- Special Edition, new pages. Lim art ($2.50)

Lawrence & Lim's EX-MUTANTS: ERIN MINI-SERIES
#1 -- Authorized 1st printing. Rare! Sizzling Ron Lim art ($10.00)

Lawrence & Lim's THE NEW HUMANS
#1 -- Limited distribution! Lim art ($3.50)
#2 -- Humans vs England? Lim cover ($3.00)
#3 -- Scarce! Ron Lim bondage cover! ($3.00)

LEGENDS OF THE STARGRAZERS (Full Color) The finest "good girl in space" art this side of Dave Stevens!
#1 -- Adam Hughes cover. Thompson/Elliott art. Sexy. ($2.50)
#2 -- Hughes, Thompson/Elliott, Yeates art. Julie in the sonic shower! ($2.25)
#3 -- Hughes, Thompson/Elliott, *hot* bondage issue! SOLD OUT FROM PUBLISHER ($5.00)
#4 -- Hughes, Thompson/Elliott, Yeates art. Bradbury hommage ($1.95)
#5 -- Hughes, Thompson/Elliott, Tsuda art. Treasure hunt! ($1.95)
#6 -- More pages! "All The Sins That Are My Life" are the startling secrets of Julie Green ($2.50)

LEGENDS OF THE STARGRAZERS PORTFOLIO
Seven art-sized plates by Adam Hughes. Gorgeous! ($12.95)

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#1 -- Stunning 2' x 3', art by Matt Thompson & Randy Elliott ($5.95)

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#1 -- John (*Superman*) Statema art! ($2.00)
#2 -- What if Tokyo's monsters were real? Statema art ($2.00)
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#1 -- Cardstock format. Intro by Harlan Ellison! ($2.95)

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#8 -- Sexier, better than ever! Art by Adam Hughes! ($2.50)
#9 -- Starring ELLERY QUEEN! Adam Hughes art ($2.00)
#10 -- "Deadly Anniversary" ($1.95)
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SPECIAL #1 -- Willingham, Davis, Pander Bros., Magyar art! ($2.75)

MAZE BOOK: THE MAZE AGENCY COLLECTION (Trade Pbk.)
#1 -- With new Adam Hughes art and cover! ($10.95)

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#1 -- Ninjas, Reverend Nearwater, the media & murder! ($2.50)
#2 -- "The Wages of Sin Are Death" is not for kids! ($2.00)
#3 -- Startling conclusion! ($1.95)
Graphic Novel #1 -- Thompson cover! ($8.95)

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#1 -- Tim Truman/VanHook/Gustovich. Ltd. quantities ($5.00)
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#4 -- B&W version premieres ($2.25)

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#1 -- Dark insanities series by Alex Nino! ($1.95)

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#1 -- All-new, well-done super-hero humor! Recommended! ($2.25)

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#1 -- First printing! Tom (*Starman*) Lyle art ($3.00)
#2 -- Limited distribution! Infantino art! ($4.00)

SCARLET KISS: THE VAMPYRE
#1 -- 52 pp.! High school girls become vampires. Jackson "Butch" Guice cover! ($3.00)

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#1 -- A fully-painted cyberpunk saga! Art by Doug Talalla ($2.50)

SHERLOCK HOLMES (Premiere Graphic Novel)
#1 -- Elegant adaptation of Doyle's *A Study In Scarlet* ($5.95)

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#1 -- Fantasy trade paperback! The search for a stolen soul! Johnson/Bryant/Sinclair art ($3.95)

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#1 -- Scarce holiday issue...art by Kelley Jones of *Deadman*! ($2.50)

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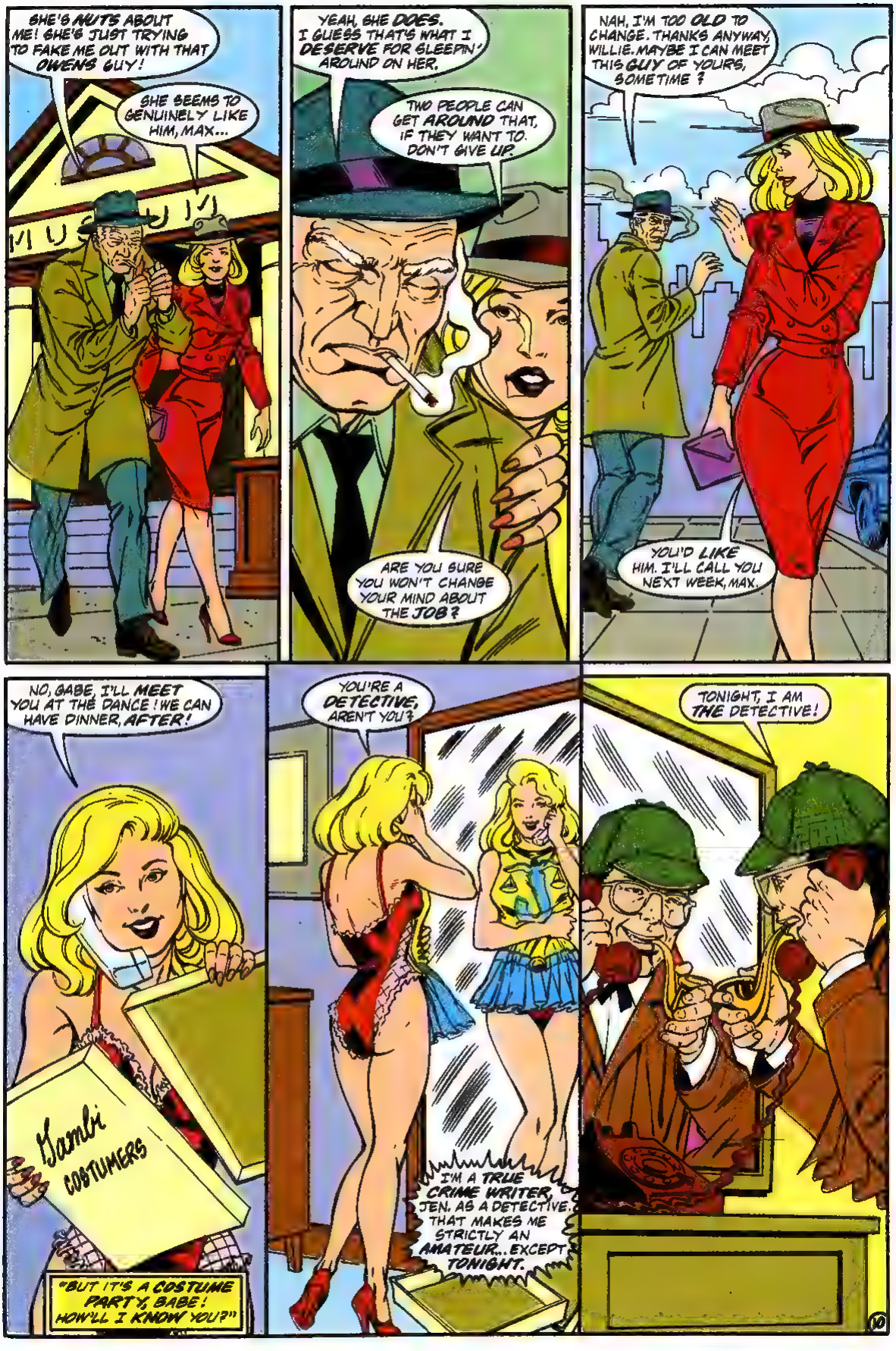
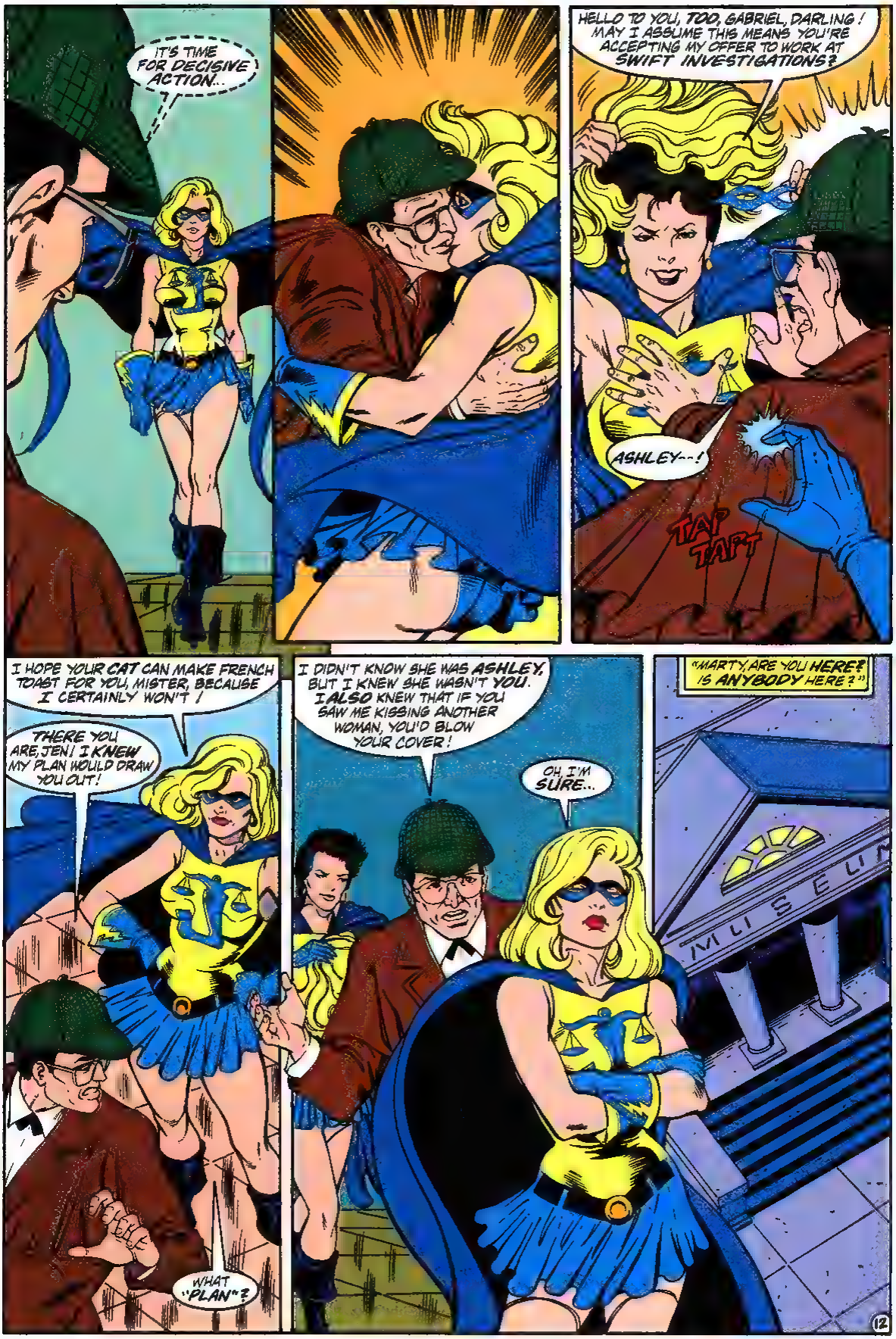
#1 -- Sophisticated suspense from the creators of *Scimidar*! ($3.00)
#2 -- Horror continues! Rare! ($3.50)
#3 -- All new! Scarce! ($2.25)
#4 -- ($2.25)
#5 -- ($2.25)
#6 -- ($2.25)
#7 -- ($2.25)
#8 -- ($2.25)

TERRAFORMERS (Full Color)
#1 -- Reshaping worlds! Art by Kelley Jones of *Deadman* ($2.50)
#2 -- Jones art; "Lunatic Fringe" preview by Statema ($1.95)

SOME RIDICULOUS ACTIVIST GROUP THAT THINKS ART BELONGS TO "THE PEOPLE," INSTEAD OF IN MUSEUMS OR--
"RIDICULOUS", PERHAPS--BUT DANGEROUS.
EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE, MR. KAROS.
THE LOUVRE HAS NO DESIRE TO LOSE THE VENUS, MR. KAROS. OUR SECURITY WILL--
"SECURITY"! YOU TREAT THE VENUS AS THOUGH SHE WERE A MERE COMMODITY. SHE SHOULD NEVER HAVE LEFT EUROPE!
MR. KAROS'S GOOD INTENTIONS ARE EVIDENT. HIS PERSISTENCE, HOWEVER, IS BECOMING SOMEWHAT ANNOYING.
DO YOU THINK THIS "ART LIBERATION LEAGUE" WILL TRY ANYTHING?
LET THEM TRY!
I DON'T THINK YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, MR. OWENS. MS. SWIFT'S COMPANY IS VERY GOOD... ALMOST AS GOOD AS MAZE.
SO WHAT IF I'M SEEING HIM? WE'RE DIVORCED, REMEMBER? AND IT'S NICE TO BE DATING A MAN WHO KNOWS WHICH FORK TO USE!
MAYBE YOU SHOULDA MARRIED URI GELLER!
NICE SEEING YOU AGAIN, JENNIFER. MAYBE WE CAN HAVE LUNCH SOME TIME...
...JUST US GIRLS--WITHOUT TARZAN!


SHE'S NUTS ABOUT ME! SHE'S JUST TRYING TO FAKE ME OUT WITH THAT OWENS GUY!
SHE SEEMS TO GENUINELY LIKE HIM, MAX...
YEAH, SHE DOES. I GUESS THAT'S WHAT I DESERVE FOR SLEEPIN' AROUND ON HER.
TWO PEOPLE CAN GET AROUND THAT, IF THEY WANT TO. DON'T GIVE UP.
ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT THE JOB?
NAH, I'M TOO OLD TO CHANGE. THANKS ANYWAY, WILLIE. MAYBE I CAN MEET THIS GUY OF YOURS, SOMETIME?
YOU'D LIKE HIM. I'LL CALL YOU NEXT WEEK, MAX.
NO, GABE, I'LL MEET YOU AT THE DANCE! WE CAN HAVE DINNER, AFTER!
Kambi COSTUMERS
"BUT IT'S A COSTUME PARTY, BABE! HOW'LL I KNOW YOU?"
YOU'RE A DETECTIVE, AREN'T YOU?
I'M A TRUE CRIME WRITER, JEN. AS A DETECTIVE, THAT MAKES ME STRICTLY AN AMATEUR... EXCEPT TONIGHT.
TONIGHT, I AM THE DETECTIVE!
10

WELL, THEN DETECT.
WHAT IF I CAN'T FIND YOU?
THEN YOU'D BETTER BUY AN ELECTRIC BLANKET TO KEEP YOU WARM FOR THE REST OF THE WINTER!
GOTCHA, JEN! BEE YOU LATER-I HOPE!
"I MEAN, HOW TOUGH CAN IT BE...?
HOTEL
VALENTINE'S DAY COSTUME BALL
...I HAVE TO FIND ONE WOMAN, WHO I ALREADY KNOW VERY WELL! IT'LL BE ELEMENTARY.
VALENTINE'S DAY COSTUME BALL
ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS THE PROBLEM OF THE NEEDLE IN THE HAYSTACK...
SO MANY WOMEN, SO LITTLE TIME...
...AND SO MUCH AT STAKE.
11


IT'S TIME FOR DECISIVE ACTION...
HELLO TO YOU, TOO, GABRIEL, DARLING! MAY I ASSUME THIS MEANS YOU'RE ACCEPTING MY OFFER TO WORK AT SWIFT INVESTIGATIONS?
ASHLEY--!
TAP TAP
I HOPE YOUR CAT CAN MAKE FRENCH TOAST FOR YOU, MISTER, BECAUSE I CERTAINLY WON'T!
THERE YOU ARE, JEN! I KNEW MY PLAN WOULD DRAW YOU OUT!
I DIDN'T KNOW SHE WAS ASHLEY, BUT I KNEW SHE WASN'T YOU. I ALSO KNEW THAT IF YOU SAW ME KISSING ANOTHER WOMAN, YOU'D BLOW YOUR COVER!
OH, I'M SURE...
"MARTY, ARE YOU HERE? IS ANYBODY HERE?"
EH HEH
WHAT "PLAN"?
12

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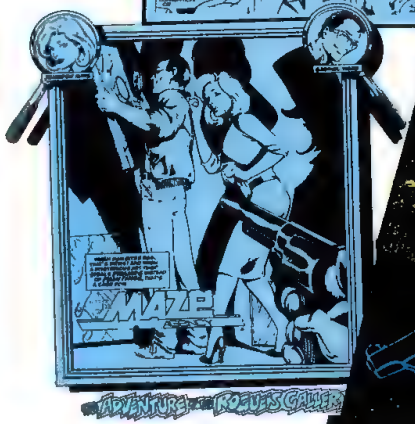

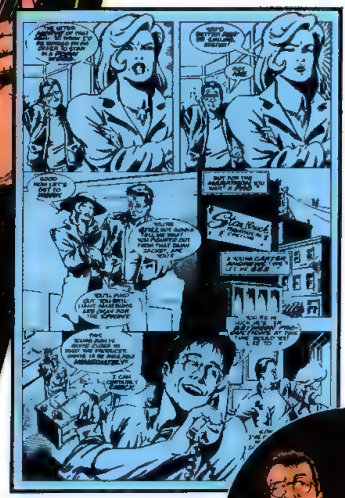

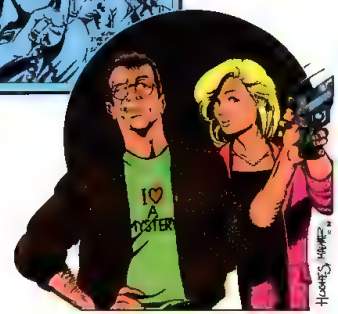

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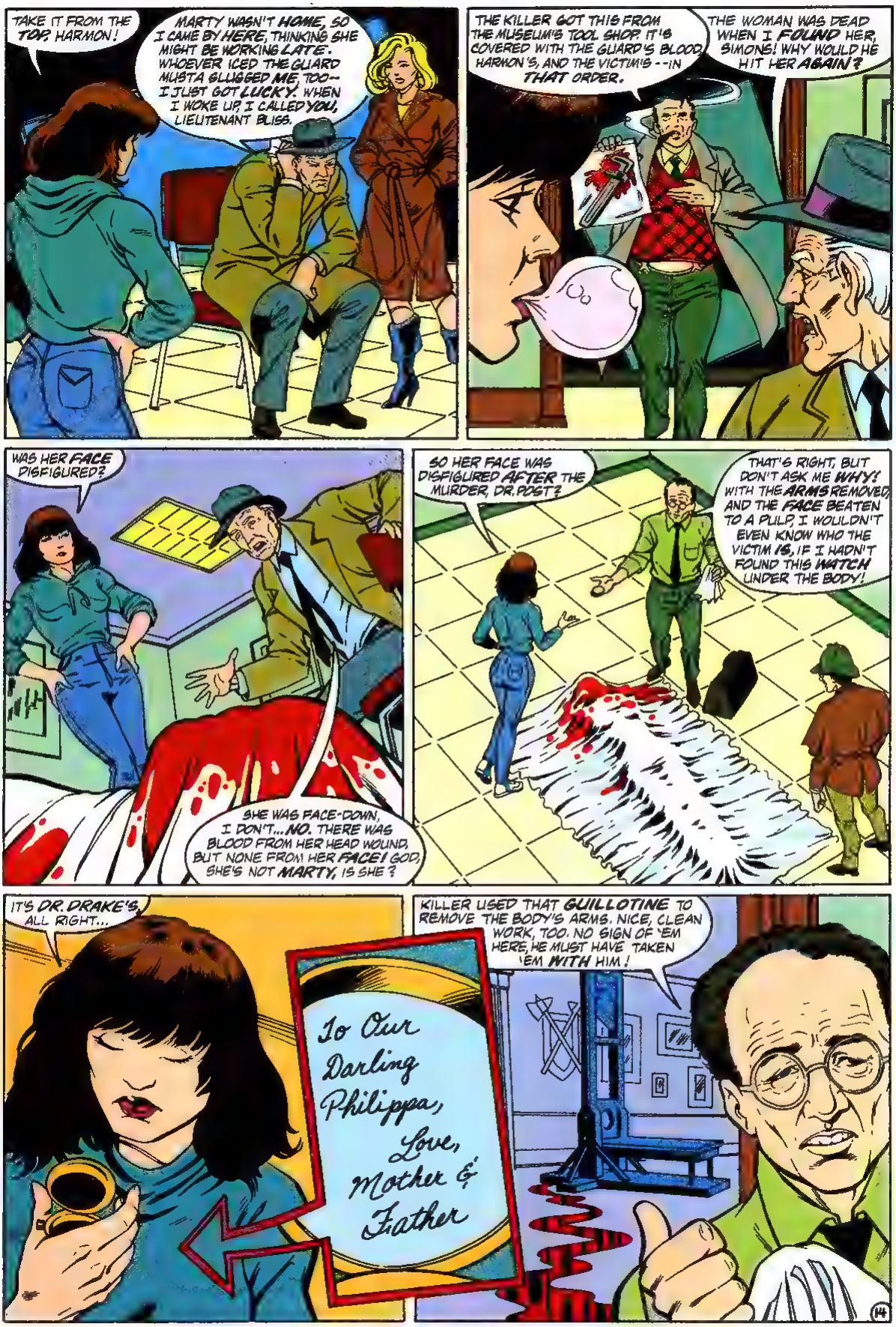
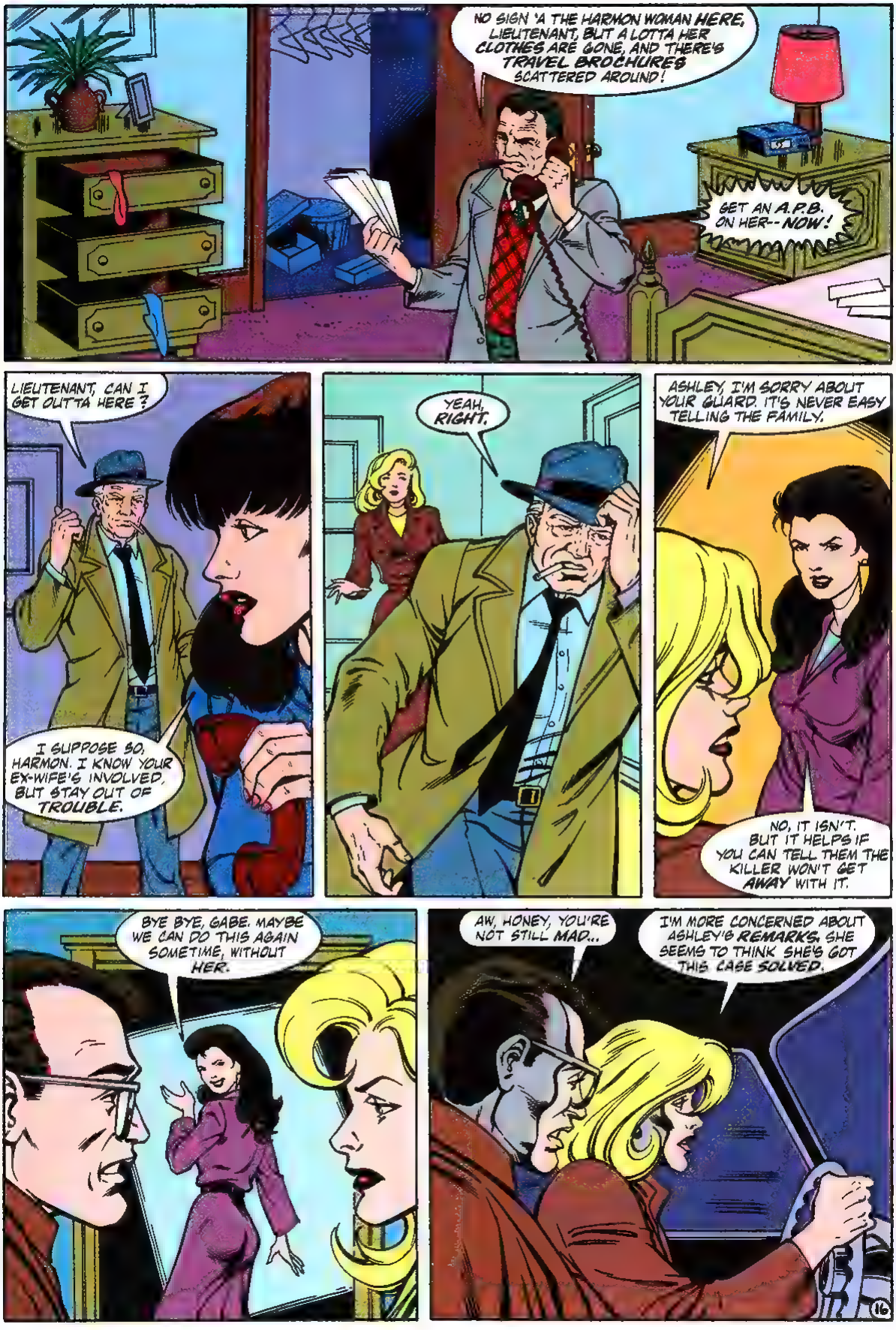
DEAD.. AND SOMETHING REALLY DID A JOB ON HIS SKULL...
MARTY!
WHAT THE HELL--? MARTY..?
ALL
UNHHHH...
...AND I'LL THANK YOU, MS. SWIFT, TO KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY BOYFRIEND!
MAKE UP YOUR MIND, JENNIFER, IS HE YOURS OR NOT? IF NOT... WELL YOU AND I MAY HAVE SIMILAR TASTES IN MORE THAN JUST COSTUMES!
SPEAKING OF COSTUMES... WHY "JUSTICE GIRL", BABE?
I USED TO LOVE READING HER COMICS WHEN I WAS LITTLE... I'D PRETEND I WAS HER!
AND I'LL THANK YOU NOT TO CALL ME "BABE", MISTER WEBB!
PAGING MS. ASHLEY SWIFT...
PAGING MISS JENNIFER MAYS...


TAKE IT FROM THE TOP, HARMON!
MARTY WASN'T HOME, SO I CAME BY HERE, THINKING SHE MIGHT BE WORKING LATE. WHOEVER ICED THE GUARD MUSTA SLUGGED ME, TOO--I JUST GOT LUCKY. WHEN I WOKE UP, I CALLED YOU, LIEUTENANT BLISS.
THE KILLER GOT THIS FROM THE MUSEUM'S TOOL SHOP. IT'S COVERED WITH THE GUARD'S BLOOD, HARMON'S, AND THE VICTIM'S--IN THAT ORDER.
THE WOMAN WAS DEAD WHEN I FOUND HER, SIMONS! WHY WOULD HE HIT HER AGAIN?
WAS HER FACE DISFIGURED?
SHE WAS FACE-DOWN, I DON'T... NO. THERE WAS BLOOD FROM HER HEAD WOUND, BUT NONE FROM HER FACE! GOD, SHE'S NOT MARTY, IS SHE?
SO HER FACE WAS DISFIGURED AFTER THE MURDER, DR. POST?
THAT'S RIGHT, BUT DON'T ASK ME WHY! WITH THE ARMS REMOVED, AND THE FACE BEATEN TO A PULP, I WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW WHO THE VICTIM IS, IF I HADN'T FOUND THIS WATCH UNDER THE BODY!
IT'S DR. DRAKE'S, ALL RIGHT...
To Our Darling Philippa, Love, Mother & Father
KILLER USED THAT GUILLOTINE TO REMOVE THE BODY'S ARMS. NICE, CLEAN WORK, TOO. NO SIGN OF 'EM HERE, HE MUST HAVE TAKEN 'EM WITH HIM!
14

BUT WHY REMOVE HER ARMS AT ALL? OR DISFIGURE HER FACE?
THE GUARD WAS KILLED BECAUSE HE SAW THE MURDERER--AND THE REASON FOR THE BODY'S DISFIGUREMENT IS JUST AS OBVIOUS!
WHAT DID SHE MEAN BY THAT?
NOW YOU KNOW HOW IT FEELS, WEBB!
"THE VENUS! THE VENUS...!"
IT'S STILL HERE, MR. STALLMAN--IN FACT, IT LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE'S TRIED TO MAKE YOU ANOTHER!
GOOD GOD--!
=GASP<
NO...!
POOR PHILIPPA! SHE MUST HAVE BEEN WORKING LATE WHEN THOSE MONSTERS FROM THE ART LIBERATION LEAGUE CAME IN!
THEY HAVE NO HISTORY OF VIOLENCE, PROFESSOR STALLMAN.
THEY HAVE NOW, MR. KAROS!
THOSE BARBARIANS! TO MURDER MS DRAKE, TO CUDGEL A DEFENSELESS GUARD TO DEATH...!
WE'LL FIND THEM, MR. KAROS.
BY THE WAY, LIEUTENANT, HAVE YOU CALLED MARTHA HARMON?
NO ANSWER AT HER PLACE, I SENT SIMONS OVER THERE.
I LEFT HER THERE ABOUT AN HOUR AGO!
15


NO SIGN 'A THE HARMON WOMAN HERE, LIEUTENANT, BUT A LOTTA HER CLOTHES ARE GONE, AND THERE'S TRAVEL BROCHURES SCATTERED AROUND!
GET AN A.P.B. ON HER--NOW!
LIEUTENANT, CAN I GET OUTTA HERE?
I SUPPOSE SO, HARMON. I KNOW YOUR EX-WIFE'S INVOLVED, BUT STAY OUT OF TROUBLE.
YEAH, RIGHT.
ASHLEY, I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR GUARD. IT'S NEVER EASY TELLING THE FAMILY.
NO, IT ISN'T. BUT IT HELPS IF YOU CAN TELL THEM THE KILLER WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT.
BYE BYE, GABE. MAYBE WE CAN DO THIS AGAIN SOMETIME, WITHOUT HER.
AW, HONEY, YOU'RE NOT STILL MAD...
I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT ASHLEY'S REMARKS. SHE SEEMS TO THINK SHE'S GOT THIS CASE SOLVED.

from the desk of
Jennifer Mays

the MAZE AGENTS

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We have decided to devote this entire installment of ***Maze Agents*** *to one letter dealing with the solution to* ***THE MAZE AGENCY #9****, "The English Channeler Mystery." There was originally some talk, among the principals involved (Jennifer Mays, Gabe Webb, Ellery Queen, and myself) of suppressing this letter, but it was quickly decided that to do so would be contrary to the spirit of intellectual exploration and truth-seeking so integral to the works of both Ellery Queen and* ***THE MAZE AGENCY****.*

Further comments follow. Those who have not read ***MAZE #9*** *should be aware that the solution to that story is disclosed herein.*

--MWB

Dear Ellery,

(*re: The English Channeler Mystery -- An Alternative Solution.*)

I've been a fan of yours for many years now, and a Mike W. Barr fan for nearly the same length of time, so it was with eager anticipation that I read "The English Channeler Mystery." Please understand that I am in no way trying to demean your past achievements or Mike's own. However, I have a few remarks to make.

The upshot of which, Mr. Queen, is that you were wrong. *Antony Rune did not kill his wife!* Please note the following deficiencies in your solution:

1.) A sharpshooter with a bow and arrow is not, per se, a sharpshooter with a gun. The principles are totally different -- a bow, for example, has no recoil.

2.) It is nigh impossible for even a sharpshooter with a pistol to aim dead center for a powder burn *which is "almost invisible at night, on the black lacquer surface."*

3.) A man who is intelligent enough to wear gloves to fake powder residue would not forget to wear gloves to shoot his wife. Further, gloves do not necessarily impair accuracy -- Rune was wearing gloves when he shot with arrows, and I have seen people shoot using "shooting gloves" to *steady their aim.*

4.) There is the total lack of motive for Rune to kill his wife.

From the first two points above, it is plain that the murder could not have been carried out as you suggest. As I show later, there are further deficiencies which indicate Rune was actually protecting somebody, the real killer, by accepting the guilt for the crime, and deliberately falsifying clues to point to himself.

Then, the question is begged, who killed Margaret Rune?

The vital clue lies in a statement made by your father, Inspector Queen. He said that the sand in Mrs. Rune's meditation tent was unmarked before they got there. But again, your father was wrong. You see, there had to be at least one set of tracks -- *Margaret Rune's own.* The fact that we did not see Margaret Rune's tracks does not mean that they were washed away by the rain. If they were, then so would the killer's own tracks -- thereby eliminating the need for the sharpshooting trick.

Margaret Rune was killed from a point blank bullet wound fired from the gun that lay next to her body. It follows that, if the wound could not have been inflicted from 30 feet away, it *must* have been fired point blank. But since there were no additional tracks, the killer must have *walked in Margaret Rune's footsteps, silently gone up to her, and shot her.*

And of all the suspects, only one person had the coordination, and the training, to make "not a mark" (Hollis on page 10) on the sand by stepping in Mrs. Rune's tracks. That person is *Ariel Chalmers.* Hollis Rune, as you rightly pointed out, suffered from ataxia, and Antony Rune lacked the fleetness of foot to commit the crime.

But why did Ariel kill her own mother? The answer lies in the real answer to who killed Tony Rune, because his killer was someone totally different. What strikes me about the "attempt" on Mrs. Rune's life is the sheer clumsiness of the murder. Obviously the crossbow was not rigged to kill Mrs. Rune. Yet, there was no guarantee that it would kill Tony, which was apparently vital to the killer's plan to fake a suicide. It could have been anybody standing behind Mrs. Rune, and it could have been *nobody* standing behind her. There is obviously only one person who could have made sure that the right person was standing behind Mrs. Rune at the right time -- *Mrs. Rune herself.* Note that just before she opened the door, her hand was on Tony's shoulder.

Ironically, Gabe was right. Mrs. Rune *did* kill her son -- possibly out of outrage after realizing that Tony tried to poison her. A person who channels spirits and actually believes in them cannot be too stable. It could even have been induced by "Noraga," who himself said that "those who corrupt my purpose must be punished, and soon."

Then witness Ariel Chalmers, who, realizing that her mother had killed her half-brother, took it upon herself to exact revenge. Ariel, whose astrology company is significantly called LIBRA, the spirit of justice. And we know that mental instability is hereditary to a certain extent.

Ariel types the suicide note on her mother's typewriter, planting it in her gown while at the same time stealing her mother's gloves. Wearing the gloves and taking the gun, she waits until her mother goes up to the tent. Looking for her gloves, Mrs. Rune discovers the note. While reading it, she does not

notice Ariel sneaking up on her in her own tracks. Margaret Rune turns, in time for Ariel to aim the gun point blank at her helmet and pull the trigger. Mrs. Rune falls to the sands. Ariel plants the gun by her mother's body, replaces the gloves, stained by powder, on the dead hands and retreats the way she came, via her mother's tracks.

Now comes the clincher -- why did (Antony) Rune admit to the crime? The actual reasons for shielding his stepdaughter are his own, and lie within the realm of speculation, not deduction, but it *is* a fact that he IS shielding his daughter. The first break in the case came when Rune (yes, it was him) stole the blindfolds from the apartment. By realizing that the blindfold could be seen through, you deduced that Rune was the killer, because Rune used the blindfold. Sloppy logic, Ellery! It could have been *anybody* using Rune's blindfold. The fact that it would be discovered as see-through in no way implicated him. Further, if it *would* implicate him, why did he wear it while *shooting at you and Jennifer*, proving that it *was* see-through?

It becomes plain to see that Rune deliberately falsified evidence to push the blame on himself after realizing that his daughter was the killer. If powder residue was found on Rune's hands, I can only explain that he must have fired a shot to plant residue on himself to strengthen the case against him (see point #3, above).

Also, significantly, look at page 24, panel 4. As you expound your solution, Antony Rune is dead calm, Hollis Rune is totally surprised, and Ariel Chalmers is glancing *rather nervously* at her father. Why? Could it be that she knows that her father falsified evidence in her favour?

But the most unforgivable thing about this case is you, Ellery. I thought the case you called "The Ten Days Wonder" would have taught you a lesson -- you leaped onto the false trail Rune laid because it appealed to your sense of vanity, of the ingenuity of the crime -- *again*. It was not Gabe that stumbled, it was you. You did precisely what Rune wanted you to do by following the *wrong* clues, and not recognizing that your reasoning was flawed. So far, my solution fits the facts at hand, and I am satisfied my logic is correct.

Maybe you played along to flush Ariel out. It's possible. But I have no doubt that Antony Rune did not murder his wife. I suggest you re-think your position. Fast. Before she gets away.

Terence Chua
B1k 243, Bukit Batok East Ave. 5
#10-30, Singapore 2365
Republic of Singapore

P.S. Mike: the art by Hughes and Magyar was great, as usual, and on the whole I loved seeing Ellery Queen again. I hope that my alternative solution also parallels Ellery's own habit of offering two solutions to a case, ala "Double, Double," "Halfway House," and "Ten Days Wonder."

Dear Terrence:

Thank you for your thoughtful and analytic letter. You have made several intriguing points which I, after conferring with Ellery Queen, Mike Barr, and Mr. Webb, will attempt to clarify.

First, although I agree that "a sharpshooter with a bow and arrow is not, per se, a sharpshooter with a gun," but, having fired both, I disagree that "the principles are totally different." True, a longbow carries no recoil, but the basic skills needed for sharpshooting -- steadiness of hand, sureness of eye, and the ability to coordinate them -- are required for both bow and firearm.

Second, you say "it is nigh *[emphasis mine] impossible for even a sharpshooter with a pistol to aim dead center for a powder burn which is 'almost invisible at night, on the black lacquer surface' [emphasis yours]." The possibility of this feat's commission has been qualified twice in your statement, which, I submit, makes it possible indeed. In actuality, the helmet Mrs. Rune wore was* green, *which would make a black powder stain more visible, though not to one of Mrs. Rune's eyesight.*

Third, though some sharpshooters may wear gloves to steady their aim, Dr. Rune apparently preferred not to -- either that, or he forgot to don them again before committing the crime. Remember, even an intelligent person may overlook important details when committing his first (and, I hope, only) murder.

Fourth, the question of motive was dealt with on page 20, box 6. To quote from your letter, "The actual reasons...are his own, and lie within the realm of speculation, not deduction."

Last, regarding your clever re-interpretation of the evidence of Mrs. Rune's murder: Obviously, if a person has crossed a width of sand, he or she will leave a set of tracks. The confusion stems from the dialogue in the bottom boxes of page 18. The dialogue of Ellery and Inspector Queen should have made it clear that Mrs. Rune's footprints on the sand had indeed been washed away by the early heavy rain, but that the rain had lessened in intensity not long before she died, and was therefore no longer strong enough to wash away the tracks that would have been left by any second party, such as her murderer. The attendant confusion surrounding these complex elements of the crime was due to unclear chronicling of the facts of the case by Mike Barr, who seems to have thought they were apparent. In his defense, however, I will say that you were the only reader who commented upon this point.

With these facts firmly in mind, it seems apparent that Dr. Rune was the only one capable of committing the crime. You ask why Dr. Rune wore the "see-through" blindfold while shooting at Ellery Queen and myself, he was using it to conceal his face, since Mr. Webb had torn off his mask. (Mr. Webb now maintains that this was a deliberate strategem on his part.) In acting instinctively to conceal his identity, Dr. Rune naturally chose the only blindfold which would simultaneously conceal his identity, yet leave him able to see, not realizing he was providing the clue which would lead Mr. Queen and Mr. Webb to deduce his identity.

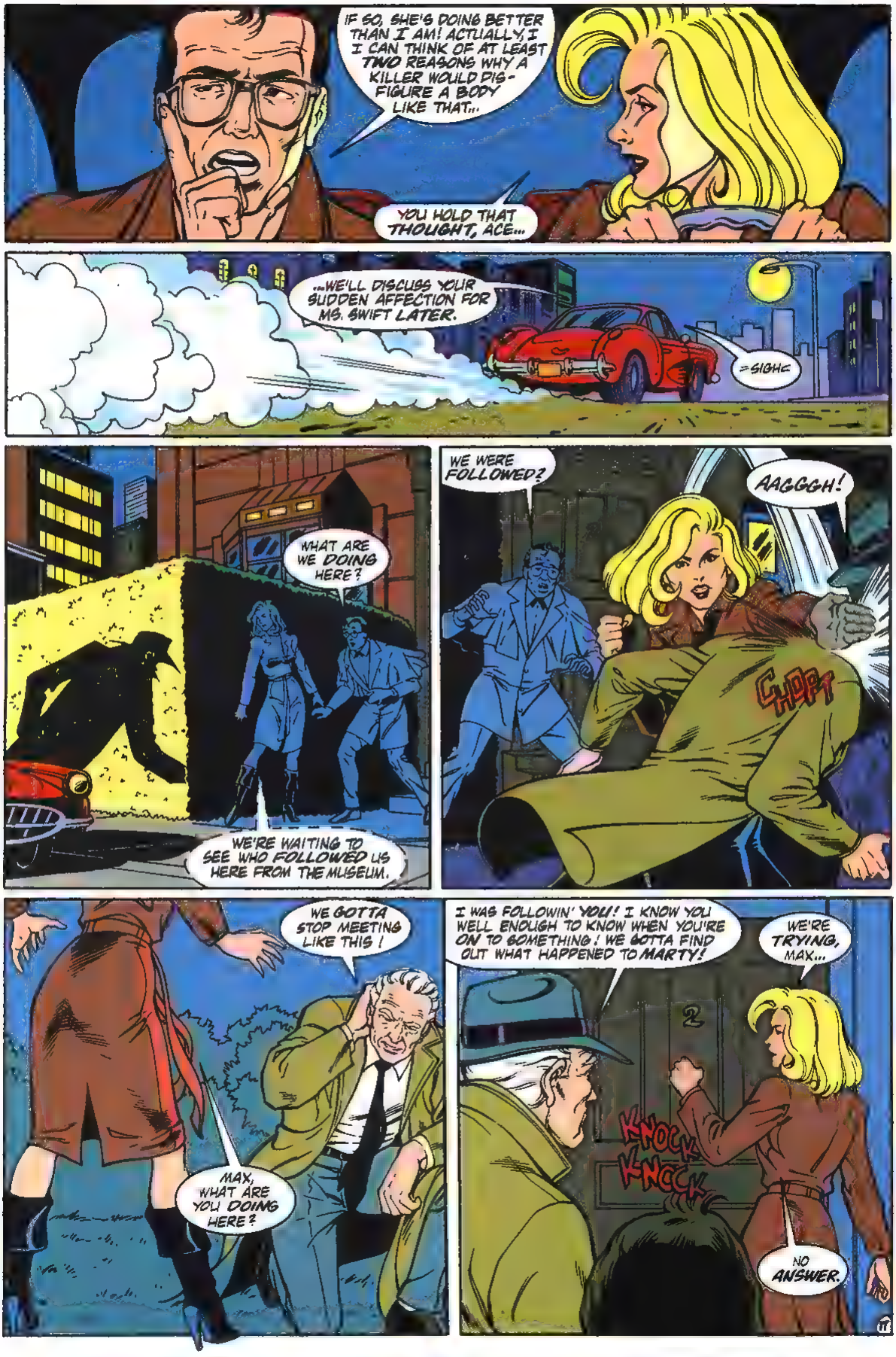
I hope this discussion has clarified the circumstances surrounding the murder of Mrs. Rune for you. Once again, thank you for your fascinating analysis.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Mays

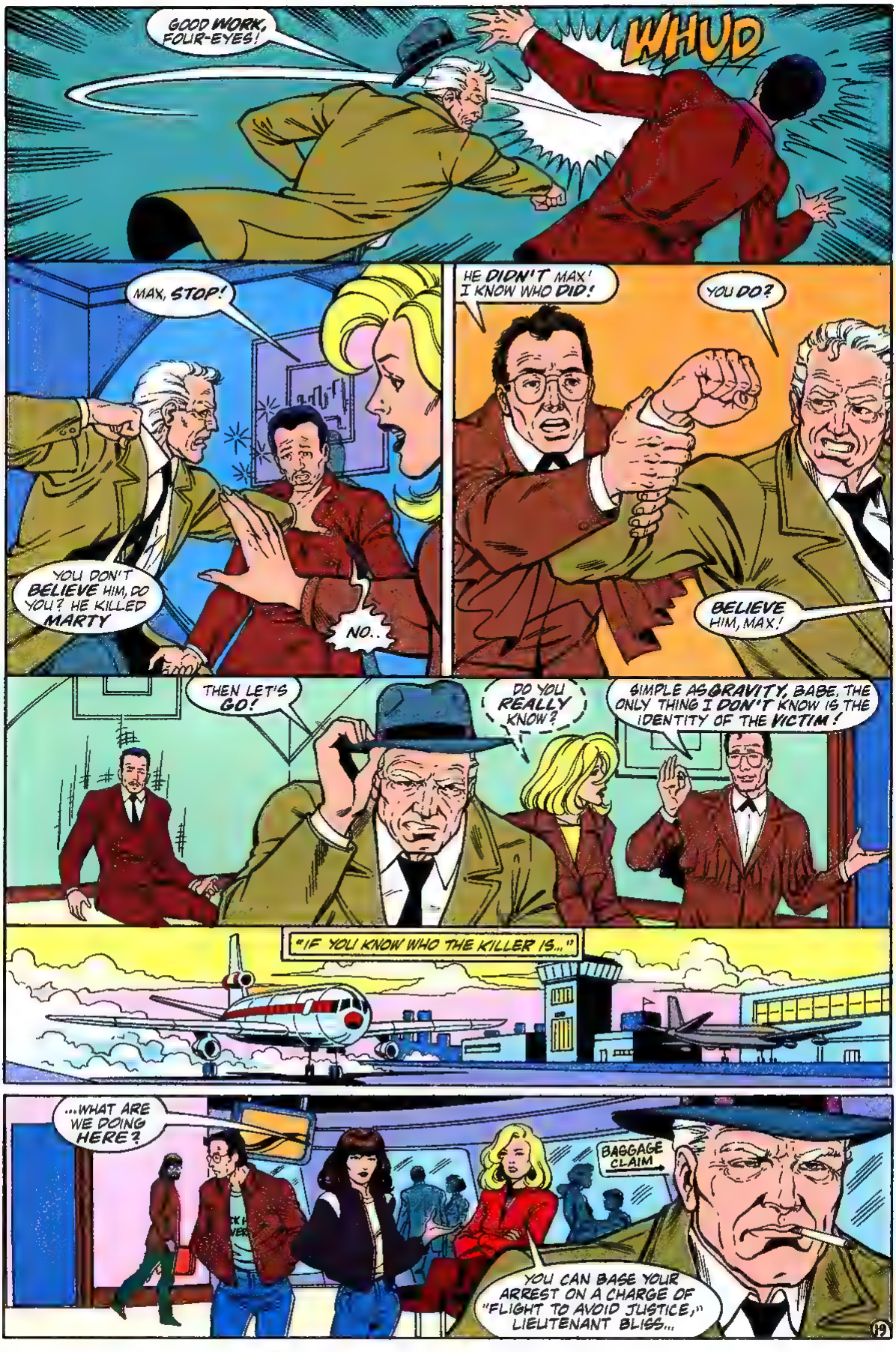
Well, readers, what do you think? Is Jennifer right in blaming yours truly, or did she, Gabe, and E.Q. send an innocent man to prison? And speaking of prison...

NEXT ISSUE: Gabe and Jennifer witness an execution -- but imagine their consternation when the convict drops dead of poison seconds before being electrocuted! Plus the return of the controversial Dr. Rune! The cover to "Before Midnight" is by ***Paul Smith*** *(yeah,* ***that*** *Paul Smith), the story is by* ***Robb Phipps, Rick Magyar,*** and --

--Mike W. Barr


IF SO, SHE'S DOING BETTER THAN I AM! ACTUALLY, I CAN THINK OF AT LEAST TWO REASONS WHY A KILLER WOULD DISFIGURE A BODY LIKE THAT...
YOU HOLD THAT THOUGHT, ACE...
...WE'LL DISCUSS YOUR SUDDEN AFFECTION FOR MS. SWIFT LATER.
=SIGHC
WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
WE'RE WAITING TO SEE WHO FOLLOWED US HERE FROM THE MUSEUM.
WE WERE FOLLOWED?
AACGGH!
CHOP
WE GOTTA STOP MEETING LIKE THIS!
MAX, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I WAS FOLLOWIN' YOU! I KNOW YOU WELL ENOUGH TO KNOW WHEN YOU'RE ON TO SOMETHING! WE GOTTA FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO MARTY!
WE'RE TRYING, MAX...
KNOCK KNOCK
NO ANSWER.

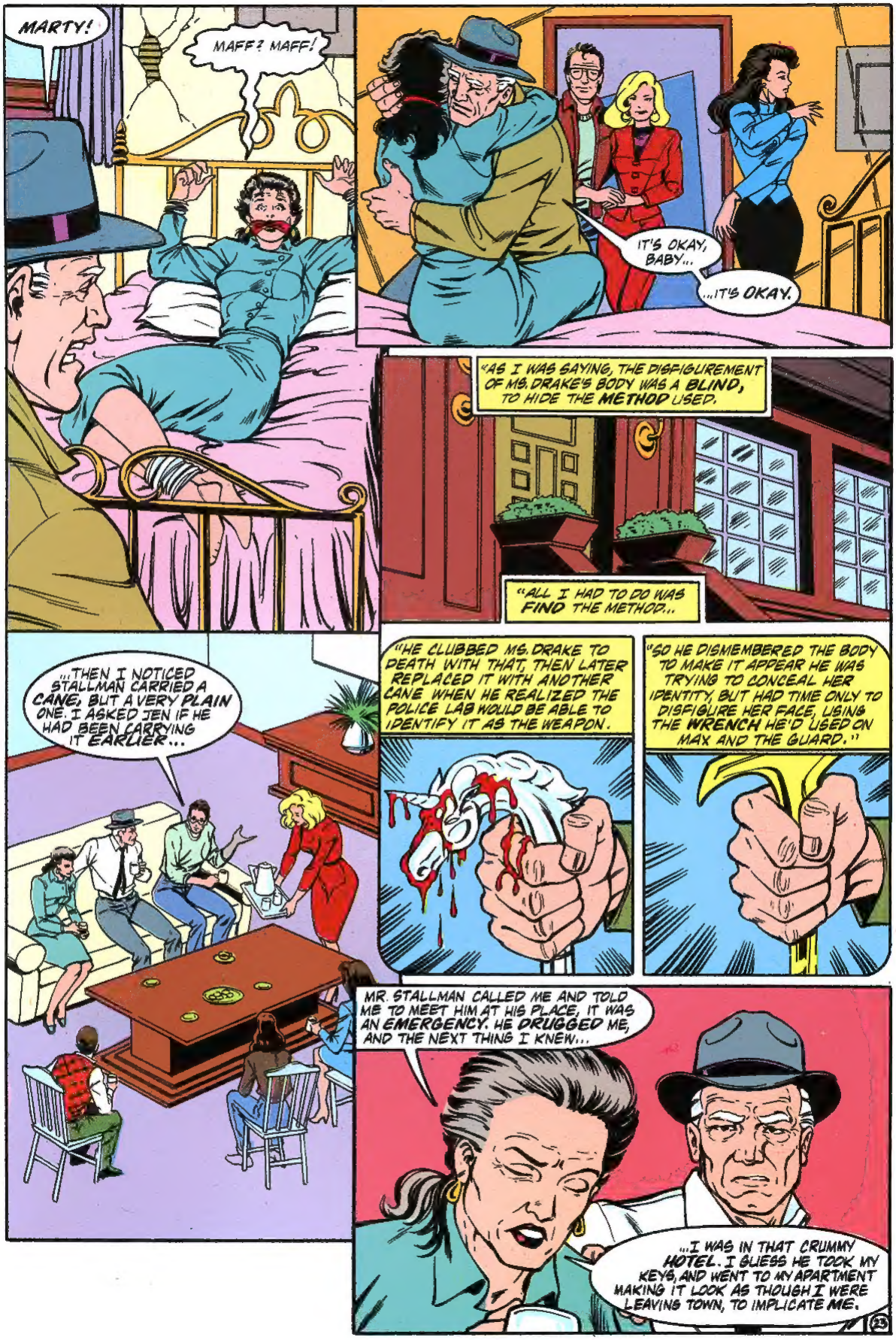
NO ANSWER... I KNOW HE'S IN THERE..
WANT ME TO TRY BUSTING THE DOOR DOWN?
GIVE ME A BREAK!
BANG BANG BANG
FORGIVE MY INHOSPITALITY, BUT I WAS JUST LEAVING.
WHERE TO, MR. KAROS? A COUNTRY THAT HAS NO EXTRADITION TREATY WITH AMERICA?
YOU KILLED MS. DRAKE! YOU KNEW HOW THE GUARD HAD BEEN MURDERED, EVEN THOUGH HIS BODY HAD BEEN REMOVED BEFORE YOU ARRIVED!
NO. I AM A MEMBER OF THE ART LIBERATION LEAGUE, THAT IS TRUE... I DID GO TO THE MUSEUM TONIGHT, BUT I FOUND THE GUARD ALREADY DEAD...
...AND MY ORGANIZATION DEFAMED BY THE KILLER! SOMEONE KNEW OF MY ASSOCIATION WITH A.L.L....
...AND IS ATTEMPTING TO IMPLICATE--
BANNG

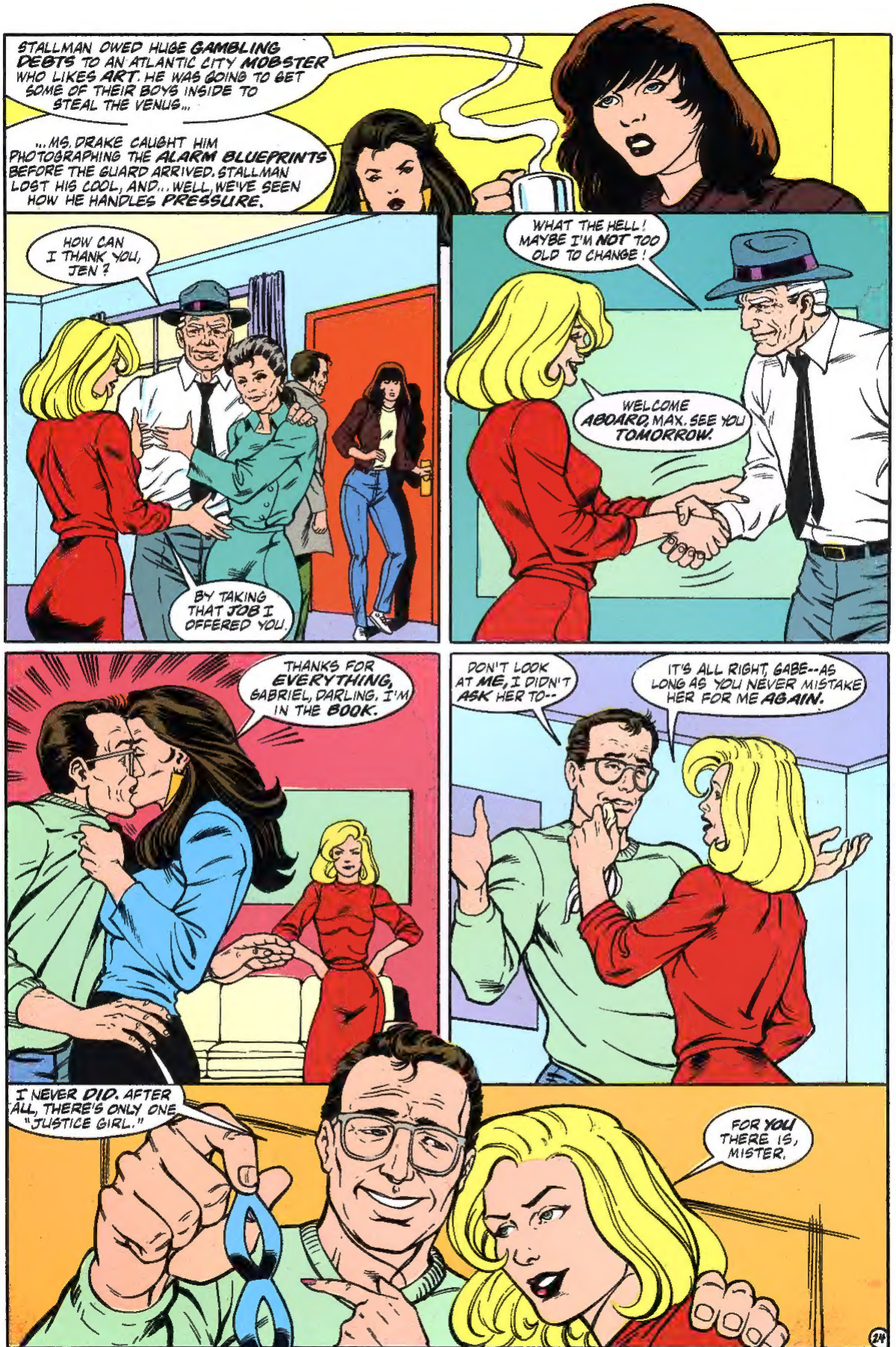

GOOD WORK, FOUR-EYES!
WHUD
MAX, STOP!
YOU DON'T BELIEVE HIM, DO YOU? HE KILLED MARTY
NO..
HE DIDN'T MAX! I KNOW WHO DID!
YOU DO?
BELIEVE HIM, MAX!
THEN LET'S GO!
DO YOU REALLY KNOW?
SIMPLE AS GRAVITY, BABE, THE ONLY THING I DON'T KNOW IS THE IDENTITY OF THE VICTIM!
"IF YOU KNOW WHO THE KILLER IS..."
...WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
BAGGAGE CLAIM
YOU CAN BASE YOUR ARREST ON A CHARGE OF "FLIGHT TO AVOID JUSTICE," LIEUTENANT BLISS...

...YOU SEE, I KNOW THE KILLER'S COMING HERE BECAUSE I TAPPED HIS PHONE!
STOP! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT!
TAKE A LOOK AT THE EAST DOORS, LOOT!
IS IT HIM, SIMONS?
NAW, IT'S MS. SWIFT-- AND I PITY ANYTHING THAT GETS IN HER WAY!
YOUR OFFICE TOLD ME WHERE YOU WERE, LIEUTENANT-- FINALLY.
I'M A LITTLE BUSY RIGHT NOW, MS. SWIFT...
I KNOW, BUT I HAVE A STAKE IN CAPTURING HER, TOO!
"HER"?
OF COURSE. THERE WAS ONLY ONE REASON WHY THE KILLER SHOULD DISFIGURE AND DISMEMBER THE VICTIM-- TO HIDE HER IDENTITY! THE WATCH LEFT UNDER HER BODY WAS A FALSE CLUE, MEANT TO MISLEAD US...
20

"...TO MAKE US BELIEVE SHE REALLY WAS MS. DRAKE, WHEN THE VICTIM IS REALLY MARTHA HARMON! PHILIPPA DRAKE IS THE MURDERER.
"THE TWO WOMEN ARE OF A SIMILAR BUILD, AND THEIR HAIR IS ALMOST THE SAME COLOR--WITHOUT A FACE OR FINGERPRINTS, TELLING THE TWO APART WOULD BE QUITE DIFFICULT!"
I'M SURE MS. DRAKE MUTILATED THE BODY TO RESEMBLE THE VENUS DE MILO TO FURTHER CONFUSE ANY INVESTIGATORS!
YOU SAID MARTY WAS ALIVE!
I SAID SHE MIGHT BE, MAX!
THERE'S ONE OTHER REASON FOR A KILLER TO DISFIGURE HIS VICTIM, ASHLEY--FOR THE SAME REASON HE KILLED THE GUARD-- TO HIDE HIS OWN IDENTITY.
THAT'S IMPLICIT IN WHAT I SAID...
I'M SAYING THE KILLER DISFIGURED THE BODY BECAUSE SOMETHING ABOUT THE MURDER METHOD WAS UNIQUE TO THE KILLER!
THE DISFIGUREMENT OF THE BODY WAS A BLIND TO HIDE THE METHOD USED, WHICH WAS--
THERE'S THE BASTARD!
HARMON--!
21

CHECK LUG
IS SHE ALIVE?
IS SHE?
Y-YES...
.AT LEAST, I THINK SO..
"IT WILL TAKE A MOMENT TO FIND THE KEY, SIR..."
HOTEL
"ONE SIDE, SHORTY! LET'S GO, SIMONS!"
MARTY?
KRASSH!
22


MARTY!
MAFF? MAFF!
IT'S OKAY, BABY...
...IT'S OKAY.
"AS I WAS SAYING, THE DISFIGUREMENT OF MS. DRAKE'S BODY WAS A BLIND, TO HIDE THE METHOD USED.
"ALL I HAD TO DO WAS FIND THE METHOD...
"HE CLUBBED MS. DRAKE TO DEATH WITH THAT, THEN LATER REPLACED IT WITH ANOTHER CANE WHEN HE REALIZED THE POLICE LAB WOULD BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY IT AS THE WEAPON.
"SO HE DISMEMBERED THE BODY TO MAKE IT APPEAR HE WAS TRYING TO CONCEAL HER IDENTITY, BUT HAD TIME ONLY TO DISFIGURE HER FACE, USING THE WRENCH HE'D USED ON MAX AND THE GUARD."
...THEN I NOTICED STALLMAN CARRIED A CANE, BUT A VERY PLAIN ONE. I ASKED JEN IF HE HAD BEEN CARRYING IT EARLIER...
MR. STALLMAN CALLED ME AND TOLD ME TO MEET HIM AT HIS PLACE, IT WAS AN EMERGENCY. HE DRUGGED ME, AND THE NEXT THING I KNEW...
...I WAS IN THAT CRUMMY HOTEL. I GUESS HE TOOK MY KEYS, AND WENT TO MY APARTMENT MAKING IT LOOK AS THOUGH I WERE LEAVING TOWN, TO IMPLICATE ME.


STALLMAN OWED HUGE GAMBLING DEBTS TO AN ATLANTIC CITY MOBSTER WHO LIKES ART. HE WAS GOING TO GET SOME OF THEIR BOYS INSIDE TO STEAL THE VENUS...
...MS. DRAKE CAUGHT HIM PHOTOGRAPHING THE ALARM BLUEPRINTS BEFORE THE GUARD ARRIVED. STALLMAN LOST HIS COOL, AND... WELL, WE'VE SEEN HOW HE HANDLES PRESSURE.
HOW CAN I THANK YOU, JEN?
BY TAKING THAT JOB I OFFERED YOU.
WHAT THE HELL! MAYBE I'M NOT TOO OLD TO CHANGE!
WELCOME ABOARD, MAX. SEE YOU TOMORROW.
THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, GABRIEL, DARLING. I'M IN THE BOOK.
DON'T LOOK AT ME, I DIDN'T ASK HER TO--
IT'S ALL RIGHT, GABE--AS LONG AS YOU NEVER MISTAKE HER FOR ME AGAIN.
I NEVER DID. AFTER ALL, THERE'S ONLY ONE "JUSTICE GIRL."
FOR YOU THERE IS, MISTER.

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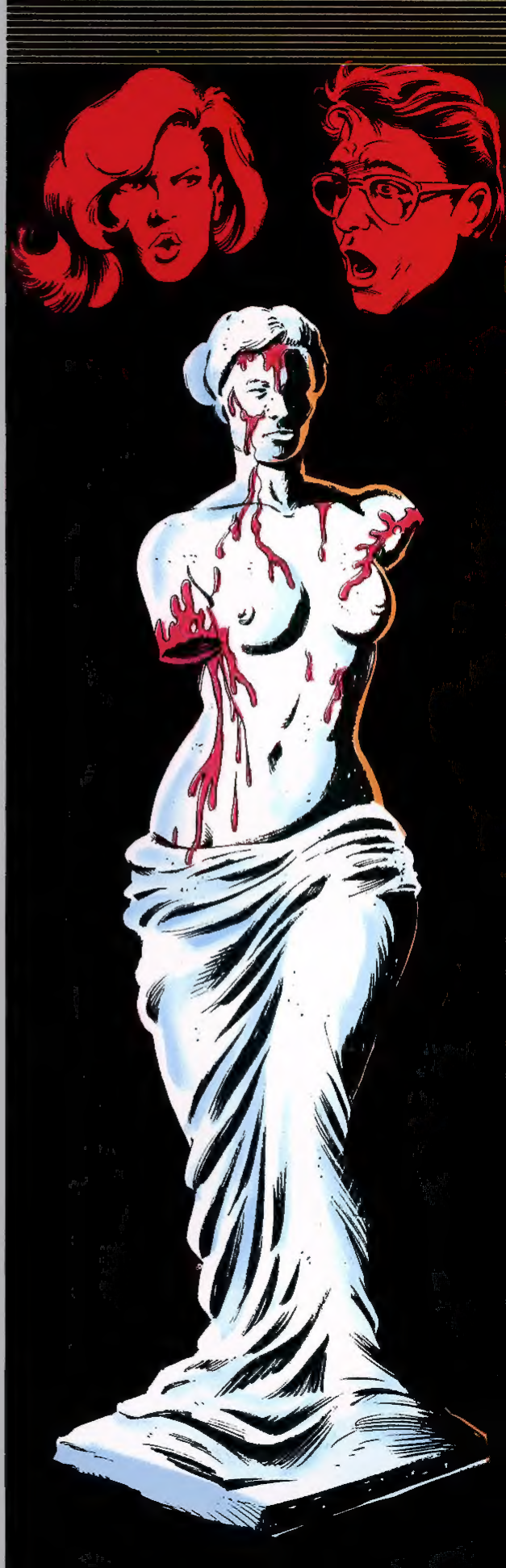
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